



## COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

### JUDICIAL PROCEDURES COMMISSION

383 Hall of Administration / 500 West Temple Street / Los Angeles, California 90012 / (213) 974-1431

## MINUTES OF THE 662nd MEETING OF THE JUDICIAL PROCEDURES COMMISSION

The 662nd meeting of the Los Angeles County Judicial Procedures Commission was held on May 19, 2005, in Room 140 at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California. A list of those in attendance follows:

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Bertrum M. CeDillos, Chair  
Clifton Albright, Vice Chair  
Walter P. Coombs  
William J. Galloway  
Ann Jackson  
Thomas J. Jeffers  
Neal S. Millard  
Carol Rose

#### **MEMBERS EXCUSED**

Lee Kanon-Alpert  
Nelson L. Atkins  
Janice Kamenir-Reznik  
Sylvia Scott-Hayes  
Robbi J. Work

Bertrum M. CeDillos  
*Chair*

Clifton W. Albright  
*Vice Chair*

Lee Kanon Alpert  
Nelson L. Atkins  
Walter P. Coombs  
William J. Galloway  
Ann Jackson  
Thomas J. Jeffers  
Janice Kamenir-Reznik  
Neal S. Millard  
Carol L. Rose  
Sylvia Scott-Hayes  
Robbi J. Work

#### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

Heather Aubry, LA City Attorney  
Lt. George Bush, LA Police Department  
Larry Mason, District Attorney's Office  
Danette Meyers, LA County Bar Association

#### **COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES**

Margaret Little, LA Superior Court  
Sgt. Bruce Haar, Sheriff's Department  
Dr. Margaret Little, Superior Court  
Honorable John H. Sandoz, Superior Court  
Honorable Aviva K. Bobb, Superior Court  
Zoe Venhuizen, Superior Court

#### **STAFF**

Jim Corbett  
Dedie Ward  
Audra Galang

#### **GUESTS**

Emily Sheehy  
Cia Hunter

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair CeDillos called the 662nd regular meeting of the Los Angeles County Judicial Procedures Commission (JPC) to order at 12:30 p.m.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Sgt. Bruce Haar, Sheriff's Department, was asked to lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2005**

On motion of Commissioner Coombs, seconded by Commissioner Jackson, and unanimously carried, the Minutes for the meeting of April 21, 2005 were approved. Introductions of Commissioners, Ex-Officio Members, Guests and staff followed.

### **GUEST SPEAKER – JUDGE AVIVA K. BOBB – PRESENTATION ON PROBATE COURT**

Chair CeDillos welcomed and introduced the Honorable Aviva K. Bobb, Supervising Judge, Probate Department, Los Angeles Superior Court. Chair CeDillos presented information about Judge Bobb's educational background, professional and judicial career, and mentioned some of the many prestigious awards bestowed upon Judge Bobb for her achievements.

Judge Bobb then gave an overview on the structure of the Probate Department stating that it is the smallest branch of the Court system, has two full time courtrooms operating in the Civic Center, and various other courtrooms throughout the County that handle trial overflow. There are also ten other court facilities that process probate cases one day a week in one courtroom. Zoe Venhuizen is the Deputy Executive Officer of Central Operations and supervises the court staff, and Dr. Margaret Little is the Administrator of the Probate Department and Family Law.

The Probate Department handles conservatorships, guardianships, trust proceedings, and decedent estates – those with wills and those without wills. There are fourteen attorneys and one Supervising Probate Attorney who has over eighteen years of expertise in the practice of probate law. Approximately twenty office staff are employed to process the huge volume of paperwork that is generated by the department.

### **Conservatorship**

A Conservatorship is established for a person or for the estate of a person who is no longer physically or mentally capable of taking care of themselves. It is the responsibility of the Probate Court to appoint a conservator who will indeed look after the physical and medical well being of the conservatee. Judge Bobb noted that the court exercises caution when appointing a conservator, particularly when the family is fighting over who the conservator should be. In these cases there is usually some type of money involved that a family member(s) wants control of.

When a conservatorship proceeding is called for, the Court will enlist the services of an independent investigator to assess the condition of the prospective conservatee. A lawyer is then appointed by the court to recommend whether a conservatorship is

warranted, and if so, who the conservator should be. In addition to family members, the Court can also utilize the services of professional conservators to oversee the affairs of a conservatee. There are also County Public Guardians available for individuals in mental health court and probate court when there are no family members or finances to pay an outside person to take of them.

Judge Bobb stated that she and Margaret Little are currently working on developing training for new conservators to ensure that they are aware what their responsibilities are in relation to the court and the conservatee. They are also working on setting up a program where a representative of the court could conduct assessment visits to conservatees in nursing homes to ensure they are being properly taken care of and attended to. Currently there are 1,400 conservatorship hearings annually in Los Angeles County.

### **Guardianship**

Guardianships are set up for children 18 years or under. A guardianship can be appointed for a child or for the estate of a child. Over the last five years, guardianship hearings have increased by 50% in the court system which may be attributed more Social Workers requesting a family member be appointed as guardian for a child instead of making the child a dependent of the court. The Court is working to ensure that family guardianships have access to the full array of resources and services available through the Department of Social Services. Training sessions are also being considered for social workers to assist the court with providing appropriate services for these children.

### **Trust Proceeding**

The Probate Department also processes these cases which are usually very unique and are either high profile or high publicity type cases. The processing of Trust Proceedings has increased over the years due to a current trend to set up trusts as opposed to probates or wills.

Following a question and answer period, Judge Bobb mentioned that the Probate Department is also experiencing instances where citizens have become victimized by paralegals and others representing themselves as attorneys.

At this time, the Court may need assistance from the JPC in implementing its plan to conduct yearly evaluations on conservatees placed in nursing homes.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

### **Update on Police Committee**

Lt. Bush reported that an officer has been placed in the District Attorney's office to assist with efforts to decrease the Department's overtime usage. The program is being monitored to determine its success level.

**Update on Partnering Meeting with the Commission for Women**

Commissioner Jackson reported that she and Dr. Little attended the Commission for Women's (CW) April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting to give a presentation on the Child Waiting Room project. The presentation was well received, and the Commission has expressed an interest in assisting with the expansion of the program to other courts. Commissioner Jackson noted that the waiting room program fits in with the mission statement of the CW which is to address women's and children's issues in Los Angeles County. The Commission will be exploring ways in which they can assist the JPC with this program. Commissioner Jackson will be follow-up with the Chair of the Commission to determine their level of assistance.

Commissioner Jackson also reported that the opening of the Airport Court Child Waiting Room is scheduled for July 14. The Commission and Ex-Officio members will be invited to attend.

Commissioner Rose announced that she has been transferred to the Long Beach Courthouse and has noticed that the lines to enter the court are especially long on Mondays. Commissioner Rose commented that she will investigate the matter and report back with her findings.

Commissioner Rose also commented that due to budgetary reductions, the Law Libraries are experiencing problems. Some Libraries have closed and no new book is being ordered. Commissioner Rose commented that the use of the books in Law Libraries is very important and this may be an issue the JPC can look into and offer its assistance. Dannette Myers from the Los Angeles County Bar commented that she is on a Friends of the Library Committee and will bring this issue before that body to address at its next meeting and report back.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was none.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.